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A

MEDICAL ESSAY,
WITH
OBSERVATIONS,

Towards ascertaining a

NEW, SAFE, and EASY METHOD
FOR
PROMOTING the ERUPTION,
AND
COMPLETING the MATURATION,
IN THE
SMALL POX.

✓ BY

ALEX. SUTHERLAND, *M. D.* at *Bath*.

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TO THE
ROYAL COLLEGE
OF
PHYSICIANS
OF
L O N D O N,
THIS
E S S A Y
IS
HUMBLY DEDICATED
BY

ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND.

TO THE

ROYAL COLLEGE

OF

PHYSICIANS

LONDON

AND

HANDS DELIVERED



A
MEDICAL ESSAY
ON THE
SMALL POX.

S I R,



ABOUT three Years past,
I happened to be in com-
pany with Mr. *Edward*
Goldwyre, an ingenious
man, and of great esteem in his pro-
fession of surgery, at *Sarum*. Our
conversation turned on the *Small Pox*;

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4 A MEDICAL ESSAY

when he told me, That he had saved the lives of several patients in that disease, by wrapping up their bodies in *plaster*, after the physicians had given him leave to use this, or any other experiment. At that very time, I must own, I felt a sort of conviction of the *rationale* of this method, which I cannot even now depart from. About twelve months after, I had occasion to put this method in practice, in the two following cases, to my great satisfaction. When my patients were recovered, I sent these cases to *Edinburgh*, for the perusal and friendly censure of a worthy physician there: he was pleased to communicate them to his brethren of that city, who resolved to put this method in practice, as opportunity offered: they were also read at a meeting of the *Philosophical Society*, who were pleased to return me their thanks; and,

and, as none of their works were ready for the press, I was advised to publish these histories by themselves. This advice I communicated to Mr. *Goldwyre*, who promised to join his cases. I have now waited for them a long time; his hurry of business prevents his compliance for the present; but to him I own myself indebted for the only hint I ever had of this practice.

Another cause occasioned my delay, which was, the hope of meeting with more and more dangerous cases, whereby I might make a fuller proof of the validity of this method; but, rather than deprive the public of a hint, which has been of use and satisfaction to me, I only beg leave to act the part of a monitor to others, who are endowed with a greater share of judgment and learning, and

6 A MEDICAL ESSAY

who, by an extensive practice, have daily opportunities of putting such a method in practice; and, as the size of this performance obliges me to send it abroad by way of an epistle, I know no man who has a better title to its *address* in every respect than yourself. If it but add a mite to the improvement of an uncertain art, in a disease which often baffles the endeavours of the most judicious; if it but now and then saves the life of a patient, when all former methods have been tried to no purpose; it may surely claim some regard; especially as, even in the hands of the ignorant, it can hardly be attended with danger. I am far from thinking it can act as a specific. No; it may be applied in cases where *nature* would have done her work by herself; it may also be applied in cases where the *vis vitæ* cannot be recalled; its success must depend

depend upon judicious and repeated experiments. One thing I can venture to affirm, that if a physician may be allowed to say, with any sort of certainty, that his patient's life was saved by such and such medicines, I may, I think, with conviction, say, that my patient's life was intirely owing to this application in the first case ; and whoever attends to the second, must be as far convinced, as any one can be in such circumstances, of the use of this method, by the symptoms which followed on the untimely and imprudent removal of the *plasters*.

There is hardly any disease which has employed the pens of writers more than the *Small Pox* ; much has been said, and much to very little purpose ; numberless divisions and kinds have been imagined, which seem rather calculated to distract the minds of
young

8 A MEDICAL ESSAY

young practitioners, than to inform their judgment, or to direct their practice.

How warmly has Dr. FREIND'S Method of *purging* in the *secondary fever* been contended for, and how warmly has it been disputed?

Bleeding, in the second stadium, has been opposed, and by Men of character; and yet from *Rhazis* (a), *Avicenna* (b), *Pitcairn* (c), and many others, we have undoubted histories of large evacuations by divers channels, and those continuing thro' every stage of the distemper, to the relief of the patient.

FREIND says (d), "*Omni tempore mittendus est sanguis, dummodo adsint indicantia, &c.*"

(a) Continens, 18. 8. (b) Variol. Anomal. ann. 1674-5. (c) Epist. de Variol. (d) Epist. de Purg.

Sim-

Simplicity in practice seems to be the genius of the present age, and the nearer we come to this, the nearer we approach to nature, which ought to be our guide.

It may, in general, be asserted, *That* all sorts of the SMALL POX are of the same nature, and proceed from the same cause; *that* their different kinds, symptoms, times of duration, and degrees of danger, proceed from the various degrees of virulence, the different epidemical constitution of the year, and the different habits of the persons infected; to which we may add, the right or wrong treatment in the first stages of the distemper.

We find the opinions of some authors quite opposite to those of others, and, what is of worse consequence, each endeavours to support his doctrine

10 A MEDICAL ESSAY

ctrine by cases or facts. In such a labyrinth, the foregoing general maxim will teach us, that

“ *Omnia sunt facienda, dummodo ad-*
“ *sint indicantia.*”

All sides seem to be agreed in one point,

“ *Ut ad exteriora summamque cutim*
“ *ferantur humores.*”

Nature surely affects this road, and, when she cannot complete her work, it must be owing to some accident. The *skin*, I say, is the *emunctory*, by which the natural and salutary crisis is performed: the *salivation*, the *looseness*, the *swelling* of the hands and face, are only *conamina naturæ laborantis*.

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The *rationale* of this seems to be so self-evident, that different methods have been proposed by different authors, and all (I may say) insufficient to answer the end.

BOERHAAVE says (*e*), *In hoc statu* (i. e. in statu suppurationis) *curandus puris ad exteriora exitus, quod fit laxando cutim fomentis tepidis, laxantibus, assiduò et laboriosè renovatis.*

(*f*) By some it was a custom to wrap the patient up in *red cloth*, and every thing in sight was to be of the same colour. What virtue this may convey, is not my business to inquire: it suffices my purpose, that the intention was to invite the pustules to the skin.

The chemists supposed a malignity in this disease, owing its cause to

(*e*) Aphor. 142.

(*f*) Rosa Anglicana.

some poison not protruded from the *centre* to the *skin*; and, concluding that all *alexipharmics* were *antidotes*, they often conspired, with a most violent disease, to destroy the patient, by aggravating the distemper.

The *judicious* SYDENHAM has sufficiently corrected this error, by a more rational practice.

Dr. WINTRINGHAM, from *Avicenna Rhaxis*, &c. proposes, in urgent cases of the confluent kind, where there is danger of *absorption*, to open all the *pustules with a lancet*.

HILSCHER proposes the *abrasio capillorum* to encrease perspiration.

Baths, total or partial, have been proposed; but whoever considers the difficulty of drying the patient, the
danger

danger of catching cold, and the expence of serum, will hardly think the experiment worth the labour, and, in some cases, hurtful.

Dr. MEAD's method of *scarifying*, and *fomenting* with digestives, was, in that particular case, highly judicious; but can never be admitted in general (g).

These quotations, out of many more which might be produced, will suffice to evince the reason of my general position, *viz.*

“ *Ut ad exteriora summanque cutim*
“ *ferantur humores.*”

How the end is answered by any or all of the above methods, I leave the reader to judge. There still seems to be wanting a method more effect-

(g) Med. de Variol. p. 50.

14 A MEDICAL ESSAY

al, more universal, and liable to none of the inconveniencies of the former. If such a method could be found out, there would be no necessity of spending time in searching after that *antidote*, hoped for by the *indefatigable* BOERHAAVE, nor of flying to his *antiphlogistic* method. That, by designed *bleedings*, or by accidental large evacuations, this disease has been totally carried off, without *an eruption*, when otherwise it would have appeared, I make no question; the authorities of this *great man*, *Fuller*, *Botallus*, and of many others, clear my doubts; besides, I was convinced in two cases from my own experience. He says (b), *Methodus universalis videtur hic adhiberi posse illa, quæ deprehensa est in omni inflammatorio valere, ne inflammatio in pus gangrænamve abeat, quum in aliis morbis succedat, hic nihil*

(b) Aphor.

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repugnet, morbus variolosus sæpe sine variolis fit. That the SMALL POX has been carried off without eruption by this method, and that the same will again happen, I say, I do not question; but that this can ever obtain as a general practice, I very much doubt. The (*aliis morbis*) hinted at, are the *pleurisy* and *peripneumony*. What is it that warrants the bold use of the lancet in these diseases? Why, *ne inflammatio in pus gangrænamve abeat.* Could we (with any reason) expect a crisis externally, would not the *anti-phlogistic* method contradict both reason and custom? Why then are we to fly to this method in a disease, where a gangrene is seldom the case, nor any of those dreadful symptoms, which attend an ulcer in the *pleura* or lungs? *Cocta non cruda sunt evacuanda* is a solid maxim, which, *aphor.* 1394. (*mittatur sanguis ut in pleuritide*

16 *A MEDICAL ESSAY*

tide & peripneumonia) plainly contradicts. Necessity warrants the bold practice in these; but in the *Small Pox* nature points the crisis to the *skin*; nor can there be any reason to offer her such violence. Let the *learned* and *curious* rather consider, whether it is possible to find out a method, by which *nature* may be willingly and gently led to her intended port, *whereby* a more complete *crisis* by *eruption* may be obtained, than what any of the above methods promise. Experience and observation must certainly confirm every new experiment; but unfinished hints have this advantage, of awakening the genius of men of greater learning and practice: with this view it is, that I beg leave to offer a new method for *promoting the eruption*, and for *completing maturation*; viz.

By

By covering the whole body with plaster.

It may be composed of *melilot*, *basilicon*, &c. according to the degree of heat or attraction required. The *time of application* may be according to the symptoms: if I may be allowed, in general, to give my opinion, they may be properly applied in the beginning of the *suppuratory state*. If they are continued, or renewed, till the last pustule is turned, so much the better.

May not this application, by its warmth and attraction, invite the morbid matter to its proper *emunctory*, the *skin*?

May it not concoct and ripen it by its genial heat?

May

18 A MEDICAL ESSAY

May it not prevent the *materies morbifica* being reſorbed, and thus avert, or at leaſt render the ſecondary fever milder?

May it not, for the ſame reaſon, ſupply the place of the *loofeneſs*, *ſwelling* of the hands and face, &c.?

May not this, if partially applied, act the part of *ſinapiſms*, *pediluviums*, or *revellents*, and thus relieve the brain and other viſcera?

May not the tenſive univerſal pain be greatly relieved?

May not the *ſweating*, which, in ſome caſes, is ſo fatal, be prevented?

May not that ſhocking appearance, mentioned by FERNELIUS, be prevented?

vented? *Morbi fæditas tam deformis aliquando visa, ut occæcatis oculis, universa cutis in squamas fætidas, & crustas ingentes solveretur, corpus omne non aliter contabesceret, & macie nigroreque torreretur, quam si menses quatuor e furca pependisset.*

May not the *pitting*, in a great measure, be prevented, as well as other innumerable bad symptoms, which happen by reason of the *materies mor-bifica* either being resorbed, or not duly concocted?

May not this practice also be extended to other diseases, particularly to *pestilential fevers*, &c?

If these, or any of these advantages may be obtained, may it not be worth while to put in practice a method,
D which

which is attended with no danger, trouble, or inconvenience?

C A S E I.

Nov. 1747. **A** Young lady, aged 13, tall, of a delicate constitution, lived in a boarding-school at *Marlbrough* seven days, with one of her school-fellows, who was infected with a benign sort of the *Small Pox*. She was then removed to another house, where she lived some days, without any of the symptoms of the first stage. By way of preparation or prevention, she was officiously purged three several times. Some of the cathartics having operated violently, when I first saw her, she was delirious and comatous, her pulse oppressed and sluggish, which, I thought, might be owing to her blood's being too much drained of its *serum*: some
pimples

pimples appeared on her face and neck. She was blooded only to the quantity of *unc. vi*, which was florid and dense. In a few hours, she was less comatous, the *pustules* appeared more distinctly, and her pulse was freer. This lasted but a short while; the pustules seemed to be all at a stand, and the fever insufficient for the eruption. A blister was applied *inter scapulas*, which brought her to her senses, and gave a better appearance to the pustules. The effect of this lasted only about twelve hours; the pulse sunk, and pustules rather disappeared; the alexipharmic regimen was closely pursued. I visited her almost every hour day and night: I found the effect of these medicines but momentary, and exchanged them for sago, hartshorn jellies, rich sack-whey, *immo aliquando in ebrietatem*; and, if these were but in the least intermitted, her pulse, pu-

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stules,

22 A MEDICAL ESSAY

stules, and spirits, sunk accordingly. Sinapisms were frequently applied to her soles, *fomentations* to her breast, which always relieved her *singultus*; but in exchange, left a lowness of spirits. These methods were alternately and constantly pursued, by the consent of an ingenious physician in the neighbourhood, who visited her three or four times: yet about the seventh day from the eruption, (being the distinct sort) the pustules were flat, shrivelled, and even with the skin, the interstices pale, the pulse weak. her face more delicate than in health; in a word, nothing seemed to promise a crisis. I ordered her head to be shaved, and her whole body to be covered with melilot plaster: sinapisms were applied to her soles, to raise a fever, till the plasters began to warm. In six hours time the pulse was fuller and evener than at any time

time of the disease; the face puffed up; the pustules encreased with well-concocted matter; the universal tense pain was abated; the pustules on the extremities, from being red, hard, and small, became large, and full of matter; the singultus vanished; in a word, after the application, she required only the nourishing diet, and that more moderately: she had a full load, and now enjoys better health than ever.

C A S E II.

Nov. 1747. **A** Woman, aged about 18, of a habit of body remarkably gross (*maximè olida quasi*) strong, and fat, was, at the same time, and in the same school, taken with the common symptoms of the *Small Pox*. She was blooded to *lib. j.* and vomited. The pustules appeared

peared very thick, resembling the *exiliores duriores ad maturitatem non pervenientes* of RHAZIS, the skin all over of a deep-red colour. Nature seemed to be oppressed by her gross constitution: she had clysters thro' the whole of the disease, which, in some measure, answered. In her face, they hardly ever rose above the skin, and that in one continued *pellicle*, with matter like that of *crystalline*, with some livid spots: she was often fomented. On the seventh day after the eruption, finding no signs of maturation, she was wrapped up in melilot plaster. Next day, the skin resembled dark parchment, with veins or seams of well-concocted matter. From behind her ears and head, matter ran down in streams. When any part of the plaster was raised, there issued forth, as it were, a smoak of a very disagreeable smell. The pustules
all

all over her body enlarged; the interstices changed that intense red colour for the damask; the universal tense pain abated: every thing went on well till they turned, which was the twelfth or thirteenth day, counting from the beginning: the pustules on the extremities continued to enlarge and fill. The women who waited on her, offended at the stench of the matter, which stuck in great quantities to the plaisters, unplastered her. In two days after, she laboured under a violent pleurisy and peripneumony, with a pulse (*bacculi instar*) hoarseness, and a difficulty of breathing. Surprised at this unexpected change, without suspecting the cause, she was bled to *lib. j.* This was soon repeated: fomentations, clysters, ptisans, and blisters, were closely pursued, till all these threatening symptoms were reduced to a little cough,

26 *A* MEDICAL ESSAY

cough, and loss of appetite. Then, and not till then, was the true cause found out: her head and thorax were again covered with plaster, by which the *materies morbifica* was moved from the lungs, the cough ceased, and her appetite grew better. She continued unusually thin for some time, and her belly swelled, which then was imputed to the removal of the plasters; but, in five months after, I was convinced, that this swelling was owing to a more natural cause; she was, in due time, brought-to-bed of a lusty boy.



O B S E R-

OBSERVATIONS.

1. **O**NE of the scholars had a heavy load, with great swelling of the face and hands. On the eighth day from the eruption, I found her pulse full and quick, *dyspnœa*, hoarseness, and sore throat. She had a purging clyster, which brought off six large fœtid stools, and was soon out of danger. (*Vide philos. transact.* N^o. 390. p. 379. Dr. Huxham.)

2. To those, who went through the disease without any bad symptom, I gave *syrup. diacod.* every night. In case of *restlessness, fever, delirium, hoarseness, dyspnœa*, I gave a milk clyster, which always answered. (*Vide med. essays, Edin. vol. vi. p. 580.*)

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3. One of the scholars lived with the first infected seven days, had all the symptoms of the first stage, was blooded and vomited, and got quite well without eruption. (*Vide Boerh. aphor. 1393.*)

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